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ABSTRACT

A 1997 workshop developed strategies to help higher education institutions (HEIs) enhance their capacity to support the goals of basic education, as articulated at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All. Ten country studies were used as resource materials. Strategies were articulated to support basic education through teacher education, research, and service to the community. Teacher education strategies included "train the trainers" initiatives and reexamining teaching curricula to ensure they were appropriate for basic/primary education. Research strategies included prioritizing research that contributed to national development goals and engaging in multidisciplinary research. Additional strategies addressed included: linking service to community activities with teaching and research, and creating specialist departments, such as adult basic education or continuing education. Institutional action plans were also developed to organize focused activities (courses, conferences) around basic education issues and create networks among HEIs. Additional individual initiatives suggested included: designing new courses and seeking support to establish a specialist unit within one's HEI. Participants represented the following countries: Botswana, Ghana, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Zambia, Pakistan, and England. The texts of two workshop speeches are appended. (SW)

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Linking Higher Education to Basic Education

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Workshop Report
Langkawi, Malaysia, March 1997

HE 031 051

Commonwealth
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Commonwealth Secretariat
Education Department

University of Science, Malaysia
Basic Education Research Unit

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Linking Higher Education to Basic Education

Workshop Report
Langkawi, Malaysia, March 1997

Education Department
Human Resources Development Division
Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX

June 1997

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

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LINKING HIGHER EDUCATION TO BASIC EDUCATION WORKSHOP

LANGKAWI, MALAYSIA
4 - 7 MARCH 1997

1. ORIGIN OF THE WORKSHOP

This workshop is the outcome of an initiative by the Commonwealth Secretariat which started with the commissioning of eight country studies during 1995/6 to examine ways in which countries were attempting to support basic education through higher education. The Secretariat's interest in this area goes back to the *World Conference on Education for All*, which was held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990. At that event, a commitment was made by national governments and development agencies to pursue the goal of basic education, in particular through the achievement of Universal Primary Education by the year 2000, the expansion of early childhood education and adult basic education, and the provision to all young people of the necessary knowledge and skills to lead a healthy and productive life.

Despite the global shift of attention to basic education, it was argued at Jomtien that basic education would flourish better if societies ensured a 'strong intellectual and scientific environment' which 'implies improving higher education and developing scientific research' (*World Declaration on Education for All, Article 8, p8*). In the words of Aime Damiba, programme specialist in education and planning in UNESCO's regional office in Senegal, 'We must avoid the danger of limiting ourselves to basic education and neglecting high level manpower training and research. It is not possible to solve the problems of Education for All without a national pool of expertise and without an indigenous capacity for research' (quoted in Brock-Utne 'Globalisation of Learning: The Role of the Universities in the South' *International Journal of Educational Development*, 16,4, 1996).

At the same time there was an acknowledgement that training and support for academics was needed if higher education was to better serve basic education than had been the case to date. This was a priority highlighted at the meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers of Education in Barbados in July 1990, as a key activity in improving the quality of **both** higher and basic education. However, due to the pressure of other commitments, it was not until 1995 that the Commonwealth Secretariat was able to take on board a project in this area. This started with the commissioning of the eight country studies.

In fact, these studies were already pre-dated by three others commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994 (Burkino Faso, Tanzania and Zambia) for

a meeting of the Donors to African Education (now the Association for the Development of Education in Africa) working group on higher education. With the Ministry's agreement, the two Dutch studies of Commonwealth countries were included in the current project. Out of these ten studies was generated a synthesis report, which brought together common issues and constraints in improving higher education support for basic education. The initiative culminated in a workshop in Malaysia hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat with the assistance of the University of Science Malaysia.

There were 20 participants at this workshop (a full list is provided in Appendix A). These comprised first and foremost the authors of the ten country studies, who were all academics with particular experience of working in basic education. They came from Botswana, Ghana, India, Malaysia (2), New Zealand, the South Pacific, Sri Lanka (represented by a colleague of the author's), Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zambia. Leading the workshop were two chief programme officers from the Education Department of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London (Dr Jasbir Singh and Mr Jeffrey Bost) They were accompanied by the author of the synthesis report (Dr Fiona Leach of Sussex University). In addition, a number of other interested parties were present: Dr Otto Hammes from GTZ, which had hosted a seminar on the subject of higher and basic education with the Deutsche Stiftung fur Internationale Entwicklung (DSE) in 1995; Dr Dominic Tarpeh of the Association of African Universities, which has named 'the Role of the University in the Education Sector' as part of its core programme of activities for 1997-2000; Professor Kazim Bacchus, Director of the Institute of Educational Development, Aga Khan University, who came with a rich personal experience of higher education initiatives in basic education; and Dr Khadijah Rohani Mohamed Yunus, Associate Professor and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malaya which has a major commitment to outreach work in basic education. The opening address was given by Dr Mustafa Kassim, Dean of the Faculty of Educational Studies at the University of Science Malaysia (USM).

The overall objective of the workshop was to identify and develop strategies that will enable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to enhance their role and capacity to support the goals of basic education as articulated at the World Conference on Education for All.

2. ORGANISATION OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop was organised in such a way as to facilitate and maximise the exchange of ideas and experiences in the short time available (4 days), using the ten country studies as the principal resource material. Dr Jasbir Singh, Mr Jeffrey Bost, Professor Bacchus and Dr Fiona Leach acted as chairpersons in turn, while the latter two also served as resource persons. Sessions were either conducted as full plenaries or as group discussions with a report back at the end of the session.

The overall organisation of the workshop and its programme were the responsibility of the Commonwealth Secretariat Education Department. It had invited the participants, sought funding for the workshop from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, made all necessary travel arrangements and provided secretarial support during the workshop. The University of Science Malaysia (USM) acted as co-host, with Dr Kim Phaik Lah, Director of the Basic Education Research Unit (BERU) of USM, overseeing administrative arrangements with great energy and efficiency, supported by two assistants.

Mrs Vicky Williams of the Commonwealth Secretariat provided timely secretarial support.

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs generously met all the costs of the 5 African participants.

3. VENUE AND FACILITIES

The workshop was held at the City Bayview Hotel on Langkawi Island, Malaysia, where the participants were also accommodated. BERU provided video equipment and a technician so that the proceedings could be recorded. Use was made of the hotel's Business Centre facilities for fax and photocopying.

The Commonwealth Secretariat hosted a very agreeable dinner at Pelangi Beach Resort on the Wednesday evening.

4. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

In her opening address, Dr Jasbir Singh suggested a set of specific outcomes that the group should work towards during the four days, which were then endorsed by the participants. These were:

- to determine the most effective and appropriate strategies and mechanisms by which teachers and researchers in HEIs can impact on access and quality in basic education
- to develop national/institutional strategic plans and pilot projects outlining how HEIs may proceed to enhance their role in basic education in collaboration with national and international partners
- to provide resource materials for a monograph to record the experience of Commonwealth countries with respect to achieving the objectives of Education for All, illustrate the role that HEIs have played in this process, and relate their success in developing strategies and mechanisms that have had a positive impact on basic education
- to provide materials for a handbook of good practice for HEIs to achieve the targets of Education for All
- to create a pool of HEI staff with capacity to develop basic education: to identify key issues and problems, research issues, plan development strategies, train trainers and collaborate with basic education teacher educators and teachers.

Dr Jasbir Singh stressed the importance of these outcomes meeting the goals of **product**, **process** and **knowledge** in equal measures.

5. WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

To work towards these outcomes, the proposed workshop programme was as follows:

> Day 1: welcome addresses, introductions and individual presentations of the ten case studies and the synthesis report

Day 2: exploration of the key issues and needs regarding basic education and its support by higher education which had emerged from the case study presentations; in-depth presentation and discussion of a number of innovative schemes drawn from the country studies.

Day 3: identification of key strategies and mechanisms to support higher education initiatives and to further develop higher education capacity in priority areas of basic education.

Day 4: preparation and presentation of institutional, national and individual action plans to be implemented by the participants on their return home and recommendations for future collaboration; summing up and evaluation of the workshop.

The full programme is given in Appendix B. Despite some modifications resulting from the evolving priorities and interests of the group, this remained largely as originally conceived.

6.WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

The workshop offered an excellent opportunity for the exchange of ideas, experiences and information between a well prepared and well informed group of educationists. The obvious starting point was therefore the participants' individual and national experiences. Each case study, presented in a 10-15 minute verbal report by the author on Day 1 of the workshop, provided a factual account of the most important issues around the provision of basic education in that country and the extent to which higher education had participated in addressing these. In addition, the reports provided insights into lessons learned, and examples of successful interventions; a few of the most interesting and innovative schemes of potential relevance to other countries were selected for in-depth presentation on Day 2.

To facilitate an informed discussion, each participant had received a full set of case studies and the synthesis report in advance of the workshop. The latter offered a broad perspective of the current developmental needs of basic education in the countries covered by the project, pointed to successful higher education initiatives as well as to areas that HEIs appeared to be neglecting, and identified structures and possible strategies for strengthening higher education support to basic education. At the same time the report revealed that there was a wealth of higher education activity around basic education but that its impact on both government policy and on the delivery of basic education was not great.The assumption underpinning the workshop was therefore that there was scope for more effective higher education interventions in basic education, which would benefit **both** sectors.

In addition to the case studies, valuable insights and new knowledge came from other sources. Professor Kazim Bacchus provided a fascinating account of an innovative project undertaken by the Aga Khan University in Pakistan to improve the quality of basic education without substantially increasing costs. This was done through a field-based

professional development programme for teachers, using multiple strategies which included mobilising support at all levels of the education system and transforming teachers into reflective practitioners and change agents in their schools through action research. Dr Khadijah Yunos's experience of running parenting, child development and management programmes with low-income families in rural Malaysia, and the knowledge that the University of Malaya required all faculty staff to earn 15% of their annual assessment from welfare and community work also prompted much discussion. BERU from the earliest moments offered the exciting prospect of the power of information technology being harnessed to HEI efforts to assist basic education, with a detailed proposal put forward at the end of the workshop.

At the end of Day 1 of the workshop, the priorities and problems identified in the case studies and the synthesis report were condensed into 3 broad clusters of issues. These were pertinent to most if not all of the countries represented, with the first set relating to the provision of basic education the second to the capacity of HEIs to support basic education, and the third to strategies to energise higher education.

The broad issues relating to the provision of basic education were:

> **improving the quality and evaluating the outcomes** of basic education, in particular with regard to curriculum, assessment, language, science and technology, and life skills
>
> **human resource development**, especially in terms of the training and professional development of teachers, headteachers and support staff
>
> **meeting the goals of equity and inclusion**, in particular in terms of marginalised groups and women; also ensuring community and parental involvement in the provision of basic education, and giving due emphasis to nonformal approaches to education.

Major issues relating to higher education support for basic education were:

> **the need for institutional flexibility**, including the use of multi-disciplinary approaches, the development of an appropriate intellectual and research capacity to support work in basic education, and a positive attitude towards such involvement by HEIs
>
> **resourcing**, especially in terms of partnerships, networking, communication/information flows, funding **policy development** on HE involvement in basic education, and the coordination and management of HEI-led basic education programmes.

These clusters of issues formed the basis of in-depth group discussions on Day 2. Out of these clusters of priority issues, the group sought on Day 3 to develop appropriate strategies to energise higher education interventions in basic education. A protracted brainstorming session finally produced a tentative set of strategies, organised around the three traditionally recognised key functions of HEIs, namely **teaching, research** and **service to the community**, which the synthesis report had used as an organising

mechanism with which to undertake the case study analyses. The strategies which emerged were the following:

Strategies to support basic education through teacher education

- bring basic education onto the higher education agenda through specialised training
- engage in the training of trainers (the multiplier effect)
- re-examine teaching curricula to ensure they are appropriate for basic/primary education
- ensure that training is closely linked to classroom reality
- include teacher and student evaluation in all curriculum development for teacher education
- engage in responsive training
- develop reflective teachers and trainers, eg through action research.

Strategies to support basic education through research

- prioritise research which contributes to national development goals, has a real (multiplier) impact on the basic education system and contributes to the improved quality of life of each citizen
- engage in research which has an impact on policy, pedagogy and practice or involves teachers in their professional development
- establish a research community and research culture in basic education through the creation of a special unit such as a research and/or documentation centre or a gender unit, through teams/partnerships of dedicated individuals, or through national, regional and international networks
- engage in multi-disciplinary research so as to increase its broad impact on the education system
- establish partnerships and dialogue with practitioners/interact with stakeholders so as to identify key issues accurately and to have channels for effective dissemination
- actively seek funding through as many channels as possible and develop a knowledge base on sources of funding
- disseminate findings widely and in a format and language that is accessible to stakeholders.

Strategies to support basic education through service to the community

- link 'service to the community' activities with teaching and research
- develop appropriate structures to support and legitimise such activities eg through the creation of specialist departments/units (such as adult basic education or continuing education), formal recognition of academic's time spent in outreach work
- develop flexible and innovative programmes (both credit and non-credit bearing) which can impact on other higher education activities and/or have a broad influence outside HEIs
- involve donors to maximise inputs and outputs
- build in research opportunities for academics, with plans for dissemination and further action/developments

- create and develop appropriate partnerships and permit/encourage academics to become involved in outside groups (eg NGOs)
- engage in activities which have a wide impact eg on school programmes
- provide opportunities for individual academics to participate in policy making and implementation
- learn from the community and respond to expressed needs.

7. ACTION PLANS

Institutional action Plans

Having identified the key strategies pertaining to each of these three key functions which would allow for a greater impact of higher education activity on basic education, the participants were invited on the last day of the workshop to reflect on the extent to which these strategies might be appropriate for their own institutional and national contexts. Out of their reflections and group discussions, they developed institutional and personal action plans for follow up work over the following 12-18 months. This exercise offered them the opportunity to apply the results of the collaborative learning experience of the previous four days to their own situations and encouraged an active commitment to pursuing the objectives they were to set themselves.

The group started by developing institutional action plans with the help of an 'Action Plan' sheet, in which they sought to identify the most urgent needs in their HEI in this area, to prioritise and plan, to identify potential players, benefits, constraints, timescales, mobilising strategies and sources of support, and to detail the necessary steps to be taken before implementation could be carried out.

The most prominent institutional priorities to emerge (which drew on the strategies already identified) were to:

- organise focused activities eg courses, workshops and conferences around basic education issues
- institutionalise basic education programmes (moving beyond isolated, individual initiatives to working collaboratively), with an explicit commitment from HEIs and a positive mindset among academic staff
- incorporate policies on basic education into national higher education development plans
- establish supporting structures (dedicated units/coordination committees/task forces/research teams) sanctioned at the highest level.
- create networks among HEIs (eg through the internet) and between HEIs and other parties (eg NGOs); create a capacity for documentation
- develop a research culture; promote action research among practitioners
- establish a monitoring system to follow the HEI's basic education activity.

Personal Action Plans

Individual action plans were then developed out of these institutional plans, with a group motto being proposed by Cliff Benson of the University of the South Pacific as:

> LANGKAWI - Lobbying, Advocacy, Networking, Grouping, Komunikasi (communication), Accessing, Wedding, Implementing

Personal initiatives that the participants proposed for themselves to move the institutional action plans forward revolved around:

- reporting to colleagues on the workshop, disseminating and publicising the findings, sensitising colleagues and others, and enlisting their support for basic education initiatives
- running seminars and workshops, designing new courses, developing more focused activities
- seeking support for the establishment of a specialist unit within their HEI
- lobbying key figures in support of all the above and seeking sponsors for activities
- developing research proposals.

The Director of the AAU agreed that, as the coordinating body for African universities, the AAU should review its framework for addressing the role of the university in the education sector, so that it would focus more on basic education, and that he would solicit support from outside agencies for activities in this area, initiate studies and organise meetings to address these issues.

8. BE - INFO - SYS SERVICE

During the workshop, Dr Kim Phaik Lah from BERU put forward a concrete proposal to create a data bank and networking facility around basic education initiatives, using the information technology capacity already developed in BERU. Dr Mustafa Khan, Dean of Educational Studies at USM, had already set the participants' sights firmly in this direction at the start of the workshop by suggesting that information technology could make a valuable contribution to the strengthening of basic education by providing a cheap and efficient channel for the exchange of information at the national, regional and international level. Dr Kim Phaik Lah proposed that the group should build on BERU's BE-Info-Sys Services, which was set up in 1996 to offer services in gathering, developing and disseminating databases of reseach on basic education, promoting the use of multimedia communication in research work, developing effective and innovative intervention strategies, and coordinating and providing opportunities for collaborative work. Dr Kim provided the participants with the basic format for registration of baseline data on current basic education projects in their countries, to be stored in four databases on: 1) issues and aims 2) priority areas and instructional strategies 3) target populations and groups, and 4) management. As this information was updated, it would be possible to track the progress of these basic education projects, as well as to monitor how the

institutional and individual action plans laid down at the workshop were developing. For those who were unable to supply the baseline information through the internet, emailing or faxing the details to Dr Kim would be sufficient.

9. EVALUATION

A formal evaluation of the workshop was carried out on the last day. Eleven responses were received. On a score of 1 (very effective) to 5 (ineffective), six respondents judged it as having been very effective and five as effective.

The aspects of the workshop which were judged as most useful were:

- participating in group discussions which gave focus to individual efforts and interests in basic education
- putting one's own experiences in international/comparative perspective; the sharing of experience
- knowing what others are doing and being exposed to new ideas
- drawing lessons from the case studies, eg hearing about a real HEI's experience of strengthening education (the Aga Khan University)

The participants identified the learning process as being the most important benefit to them of the workshop. This was attributed to the interactive mode of the workshop, the group work, the individual presentations, the opportunity to listen and comment, and to reflect on one's own experience. There was universal praise for the richness of the learning experience, the friendliness of the exchanges and the agreeable atmosphere of the workshop in which all worked together and no one was marginalised. The energy and commitment of all were praised.

The main suggestions for improvement to the workshop were in the development of strategies, eg one participant suggested that a discussion of strategic objectives would have made the process of developing an action plan more realistic; some would have liked to have learned more about specific strategies, in particular strategies to access funding and strategies for initiating change. It was also suggested that those participants who were not case study authors might usefully have been asked to summarise their own experiences.

The participants saw the greatest barriers to making use of the learning acquired during the workshop in their future work as being: lack of time, lack of resources, lack of awareness of basic education as a concept within HEIs and lack of commitment among colleagues. These latter two barriers could be addressed in part by running workshops at local and regional level.

10. OUTCOMES

In summary, the actual outcomes of the workshop were:

- identification of a range of strategies to enhance HEI involvement in the three broad areas of higher education work - teaching, research and service to the community

- a loose network of HEIs which will share information and resources
- a decision that key players will play a greater advocacy role, whether at the institutional, national or regional level
- a set of action plans for individual and institutional initiatives over the next 18 months to promote the objectives of the workshop
- agreement to confirm and expand the role of the HEI in basic education and to sustain the vision generated at the workshop
- a commitment to pilot the exchange of information through information technology, with USM acting as the principal facilitator
- adequate resource materials to feed into the proposed monograph and handbook of good practice.

When referring back to the anticipated outcomes which Dr Jasbir Singh had suggested at the start of the workshop, it can be seen that more had in fact been achieved, in particular in relation to the advocacy role that the group had energetically adopted and the establishment of a loose network using BERU's offer to provide a data bank and clearing house through its internet facilities.

11. FOLLOW UP

In addition to the immediate outcomes of the workshop report, the monograph and the handbook of good practice for HEIs, suggestions for follow up were for more local and regional meetings to be held, and for the Commonwealth Secretariat to monitor the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Basic Education and to alert the 13th meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers of Education in Gaborone in July 1997 to the important role HEIs can and should play in basic education. It was also important to stress the need to bridge the gap between policymakers and academics.

It was hoped that the Secretariat would be able to hold a future training workshop on project development and funding approaches to basic education, and would help to publicise the project and workshop recommendations through various fora. Other suggestions were for a newsletter on basic education to be started (similar to *Commonwealth Education Matters)* and for a sustained exchange of information through existing international fora and between organisations such as UNESCO's Basic Education Unit, the International Bureau of Education, the International Institute of Educational Planning and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX B

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Tuesday 4 March 1997

09 00 - 10 45 Session I (Chair: Jeffrey Bost)

Welcome and Introductions
Setting the goals - group agreement on outcomes and processes

Individual presentations of findings of the ten country studies
(10 -15 minutes each presentations and 5 minutes clarification)

1 Botswana
2 Ghana
3 India

10 45 - 11 05 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

11 15 - 12 45 Session II (Chair: Jeffrey Bost)

Presentations of country studies continued

1 Malaysia
2 New Zealand
3 Sri Lanka
4 South Pacific

12 45- 14 15 LUNCH

14 15 - 15 30 Session III (Chair: Jeffrey Bost)

Presentations of country studies continued

1 Tanzania
2 Trinidad
3 Zambia

International Agency perspectives on EFA and role of HEI's

1 Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2 GTZ
3 Association of African Universities

15 30 - 16 00 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

16 00 - 17 30 **Session IV (Chair: Kazim Bacchus)**

Main findings of the synthesis report by Fiona Leach

Group Discussion of key issues/themes for the workshop to address and overall workshop strategy
Review and planning for next day

Wednesday 5 March 1997

09 00 - 10 30 **Session V**

Exploration of key issues/constraints/needs regarding basic education - in groups with report back to plenary

10 30 - 11 00 **TEA/COFFEE BREAK**

11 00 - 12 30 **Session VI**

Exploration of key issues/constraints/needs regarding HEI involvement in basic education - in groups with report back to plenary

12 30 - 14 00 **LUNCH**

14 00 - 15 30 **Session VII (Chair: Jeffrey Bost)**

Selected in-depth presentations of initiatives of particular interest eg SATPOS West Indies, MACESE India, BELS Pacific Islands.

15 30 - 16 00 **TEA/COFFEE BREAK**

16 00 - 17 30 **Session VII (Fiona Leach)**

Discussion of usefulness/feasibility of such initiatives for other countries
Requisite conditions for success
Review and planning for day 3

Thursday 6 March 1997

08 30 - 10 30 **Session VIII**

Identification of key strategies to support HE initiatives in basic education - in groups with report back to plenary-

Identification of key strategies to develop HE capacity in priority areas in groups with report back to plenary

10 30 - 11 00 **TEA/COFFEE**

11 00 - 12 30 **Session IX (Chair: Kazim Bacchus)**

Identification of possible international agency strategies to support HE initiatives
Review and planning for Day 4

12 30 - 14 00 **LUNCH**

Afternoon free for report writing, sightseeing etc

Friday 7 March 1997

09 00 - 10 30 **Session X (Chair: Jasbir S Singh)**

Preparation of institutional and/or national action plans to be implemented over the following year/years with identification of
- priorities
- key players
- nature of initiative/strategy
- nature of donor support where apprpriate

10 30 - 11 00 **TEA/COFFEE BREAK**

11 00 - 12 30 **Session XI (Chair: Jasbir S Singh)**

Presentation and discussion of institutional/national action plans

12 30 - 14 00 **LUNCH**

14 00 - 15 00 **Session XI (Chair: Fiona Leach)**

Preparation of individual/personal action plan to be implemented over the following year/years with identification of
- priorities
- key players
- nature of initiative/strategy
- nature of donor support where necessary

15 00 - 15 30 **Session XII (Chair: Fiona Leach)**

Presentation and discussion of indivdual action plans

15 30 - 16 00	**TEA/COFFEE BREAK**
16 00 - 17 00	**Session XIII (Chair: Jasbir S Singh)**
	Recommendations for future collaboration Summing up of workshop Evaluation of workshop Close

APPENDIX C

Welcoming Speech by Dr Mustapa Kassim, Dean, School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I wish our foreign participants a very worm welcome to Malaysia, or as we say it in the Malaysian language, "Selamat Datang"

It is indeed a great honour to have been invited to address this important international gathering here in one of Malaysia's most beautiful resort islands. I would like to take the opportunity to give the highest commendation to the Commonwealth Secretariat's Educational Department for bringing together representatives of higher education institutions throughout the Commonwealth who are active involved in promoting basic education in their respective countries. I am pleased to say that the Basic Education Research Units, an R&D unit of the school of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia has been able to give its full assistance by jointly hosting this meeting with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

It is no secret that the provision of a sound basic education is the fundamental ingredient in EFA efforts. To me EFA means as much Equality For All as Education For All. It is only when there is equitable access to quality basic education for all interest groups that we can seriously begin to talk about social transformation to redress imbalance in educational and life opportunities. This is particularly important in an era of rapid economic growth where groups at the fringe of society who are already disadvantaged are further marginalised.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Among all the HEI's in Malaysia, I am proud to say that the School of Educational Studies (SES), Universiti Sains Malaysia is by far the leading player involved in promoting the case of EFA. In 1977, the School of Educational Studies was commissioned by the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada to develop curriculum materials for rural primary schools. At that time, the academic staff of SES were highly concerned with the disparity in achievement between urban and rural children. This concern was underscored by the findings of the National Dropout Study of 1973 which showed that rural children dropped out of school at a much higher rate than urban children because of the inferior quality of the education available in the rural areas. Out of the partnership between IDRC and SES, Project InSPIRE was born. The disparity between rural and urban children is even more marked in the less developed states, particularly in the east cost of west Malaysia and East Malaysia. The success of the InSPIRE materials in narrowing the gap between rural and urban school children prompted the state of Sabah to step in to provide fresh funding when the IDRC funds were exhausted. From 1980 until the present, InSPIRE has focused on Sabah. You may be interested to know the project

InSPIRE has just moved into its 20th year. Encouraged by the success of project InSPIRE, the School of Educational Studies, USM made the decision to put the achievements of project InSPIRE on a permanent footing by incorporating the organisational structure of InSPIRE under an R&D unit of SES called the Basic Education Research Unit (BERU) in 1991. With the establishment of BERU, Universiti Sains Malaysia is the only university in Malaysia to have established the complete structure and organisation to be a centre of excellence for basic education in Malaysia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I do not pretend that InSPIRE has been an unmitigated success. In the Malaysian country report we have exposed the weaknesses as well as the strengths of InSPIRE. We, that is both BERU and SES, have accomplished much in redressing the gap in educational achievements between the rural and urban communities, particularly in the more disadvantaged regions of Malaysia but this was achieved at a high financial cost. This was as much the lack of foresight on the part of the project InSPIRE as the consequence of the tendency in Malaysia to undergo frequent curriculum renewal. As a result of this, the financial and material resources devoted towards the development of curriculum material for the benefit of the rural community twice went down the drain when the primary school curriculum underwent major transformation, first in 1983 and then in 1994.

Yet our records of fighting for the case of EFA in Malaysia remain excellent. We have neither rested on our laurels nor attempted to sweep mistakes of the past under the carpet. Instead we have benefited from our experience, both positive and negative, to emerge as an even stronger force as a centre of excellence for research and development in the basic education. We have become leaner but keener, i.e., we have managed to achieve more with less money.

We have learned that the most cost-effective way of significantly fulfilling the basic education needs of society is to prioritise human resources development. This is not to say that material resources production is unimportant - we will continue to give due attention in this area as a use of traditional technology, i.e. printed curriculum materials, is still an important part of the delivery system in Malaysian schools. The same is also true in the rest of the Commonwealth. But, we believe that the future belongs to information technology.

Yes, I believe that information technology is the right tool, at the right time, in the right place to help us do what we must do to ensure that our higher education institutions can better contribute towards the equitable provision of basic education to all. It is the tool that can help us lower cost through streamlining administrative processes and fostering the most economical ways of exchanging information on the most effective intervention strategies in basic education. Exchange of information is vital for the development of basic education not only on a national basis but also on an international level among Commonwealth countries.

Obviously, then, I believe information technology is an investment well worth making.
In some institutions, new funds for information technology may be occasionally available. But in most instance, as in the case with Universiti Sains Malaysia, investment can only be made by reallocating funds from other areas. This kind of reallocation can be a fertile

source of controversy and conflict in a culture where collegial debate leading (sometimes) to consensus is often preferred over strategic design and decisive action. But we have already cast the dice. The School of Educational Studies, USM through BERU has taken the initiative to establish what we call the BE-Info-Sys Service.

Among the current projects of BERU's BE-Info-Sys service are the Tele-learning service on Basic Education and the Tele-teaching service on Basic Education. These projects are part of the school-Industry partnership initiatives programmes in Penang funded by COLCOM. Northern Region Branch Operation and CELCOM Academy. Another project is BE-MARKET, an online network that exchanges information among a group of action researchers in basic education belonging to an organisation known as ORISA. These projects were all launched between 1996 and 1997. Last but not least is InSPIRE smart visions. This project is part of InSPIRE-Sabah 4 which stretches from 1998 to 2002 - so it looks like projects InSPIRE will live on to celebrate its Silver Jubilee.

My fellow advocates of basic education,

By now you must be thinking that I am trying to sell something. I have a confession I am. Making the case for information technology actually shouldn't be all that difficult. In a very real sense, it sells itself, and this is particularly true of the university settings.

I don't need to tell you in this group, which is at the cutting-edge of basic education research and practice, that the application of information technology represents a revolution. But I'll tell you anyway!

I'll also tell you that I firmly believe that the use of information technology will gradually change almost everything about the process of teaching and learning. The role of faculty will change from that of founts of information ("the sage on the stage") to that of guide, coach, and mentor in helping learners to digest, interpret, and synthesize information into knowledge and undertaking through the use of multimedia. For the researcher and activist in basic education in the Commonwealth, IT will foster increased collaboration in developing research, training, consultancy and innovative programmes to strengthen basic education.

All that is lacking now is a nerve centre to manage the collection and dissemination of such information. Therefore, I propose that the existing BE-Info-Sys Service of BERU be expanded to fill this need. BERU already maintains a data base of research information on basic education in Malaysia. But we in USM cannot upgrade this data base information system on basic education to an international system on our own. Besides the main service centre we need to have branch service centres located at strategic locations throughout the world - we need partners in other parts of the Commonwealth and the world. Besides partners, we also need the necessary findings. I hope that there will be opportunity during this gathering to discuss this proposal.

To conclude, information technology is not in and of itself the solution to our problems. But is the potential - the great potential - to make their solution feasible, if we can muster the creativity, the courage, and the will necessary to deal with them.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this morning. I would also like to extend an invitation to all participants to visit USM and Penang at the end of this workshop. And do feel free to contact me, via electronic or regular media, of course!

With these words, I take great pleasure in declaring open the workshop on "Linking Higher Education to Basic Education".

APPENDIX D

Address by Dr Jasbir S Singh, Chief Programme Officer, Education Department, Commonwealth Secretariat

Colleagues and friends,

I am truly delighted to be here today in Langkawi at the start of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Linking Higher Education to Basic Education Workshop. This workshop is hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat and co-hosted by the Basic Education Research Unit of the Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang who are represented here today by Dr Mustapa Kassim, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Dr Kim Phaik Lah, Director of the Basic Education Research Unit. We have also received financial support for participants from Africa from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs which has a long standing interest in this subject.

First, then, let me, on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat and other sponsors of the programme, say how pleased we are to be a part of this happening. I would like to say a special word of welcome to the participants and the resource persons to the workshop. I bring to all of you greetings from Professor Stephen Matlin, the Director of the Human Resource Development Division to which I belong, and which has worked for the last year towards bringing this workshop together.

First, a quick word about the Commonwealth and what it stands for. The Commonwealth is a voluntary organisation of 53 independent nations. Its people make up a quarter of the world's population and are drawn from a diverse range of faiths, races, languages and cultures. Countries work as equal partners, not by charter, but by shared legacies and experience. They are committed to the fundamental principles of democracy, human rights, just and honest government and a fairer distribution of the world's wealth. At Auckland in 1995 Commonwealth Heads of Government at their Meeting (CHOGM) agreed on a three pronged Commonwealth action: advancing Commonwealth fundamental political values; promoting sustainable development; and facilitating consensus building.

The Secretariat's work programme in education has activities in basic education, science, technology and mathematics education and in higher education with an underlying interest in issues of small states and gender. Higher education initiatives are designed to enhance the quality of higher education delivery in developing countries. The principal programmes in higher education are:

- The Commonwealth Higher Education Support Scheme or CHESS which concentrate upon the provision of support to developing country universities in the supply of academic materials; improvement of higher education management; and promotion of staff development.

- Commonwealth student mobility through building institutional links and encouraging student exchanges within the framework of the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC).

- The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) a multilateral Commonwealth awards scheme which enables students to undertake full time study in another Commonwealth country leading to a higher degree. There are currently about 1700 scholars under the CSFP.

Training and support for university academics to enable higher education to better serve the needs of basic education was identified as a priority area by Commonwealth Ministers of Education at their meeting in Barbados in 1990, as it was seen as a key activity to improve the quality of both the higher and basic education sectors. Due to pressures of work in other areas of the Department's work, the project only began to be developed during 1995.

The facts about the need to develop and improve access to and quality of basic education have been well argued since the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. This Conference provided a new impetus to the role of education in the development process. The WCEFA introduced the concept of "basic learning needs" and all countries were invited to formulate national targets to achieve these needs. Basic education has been broadened to include in addition to primary education, early childhood education as well as adult education and the acquisition of basic life skills for both youth and adults. It is argued that basic education ensures the skills needed to lead a decent life and will enable the individual to participate effectively in his/her community and society. To achieve this bold vision of basic education requires the formulation and implementation of new strategies and innovative approaches.

The role of higher education in basic education needs little explanation. Higher education institutions, particularly universities, represent the apex of the education pyramid and influence to a large extent the quality of the education system. Universities bear a special responsibility in improving the efficiency and quality of education systems. Even at Jomtien it was argued that basic education will flourish better if societies ensured a "strong intellectual and scientific environment" which "implies improving higher education and developing scientific research". (World Declaration on Education for All, Article 8, p8). This view was fully endorsed by Aime Damibia, programme specialist in education and planning in UNESCO's regional office in Dakar, Senegal, when in an evaluation of the outcome of the EFA Conference, he concluded that

> "We must avoid the danger of limiting ourselves to basic education and neglecting high level manpower training and research. It is not possible to solve the problems of Education for All without a national pool of expertise and without an indigenous capacity for research" (Damiba, 1991, quoted by Birgit Brock-Utne, "Globalisation of Learning: The Role of the Universities in the South", Oxford Conference, 21-25 September, 1995).

HEIs possess a special pool of capacity and expertise within developing countries which need to be harnessed for the benefit of basic education. HEIs traditionally perform the tasks of teaching, training, research and service to their communities. Unfortunately not many HEIs have addressed the problems of basic education. Basic education has not enjoyed the prestige within universities that it deserves. Colleagues in the Education Department, working in basic education, point to the dearth of leadership provided by HEIs coupled with the absence of adequate knowledge base and practical experience among HEI staff to work effectively in basic education.

The subject is beginning to gain widespread interest in the donor community. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa, then known as the Donors to Africa, in 1994 devoted one day of its deliberation at its meeting of the Working Group on Higher Education in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Three case studies on the contribution of higher education, commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Zambia - were presented. Two of these studies are included in our set of studies and their authors are here with us - from Tanzania and Zambia. During 1995 the German aid agency GTZ and DSE held a seminar on the subject. We are pleased to see Dr Hammes of GTZ here today. At its recent Annual General meeting the Association of African Universities has adopted the role of higher education in the basic education sector as one of its priority areas for the next three-year programme. Dr Dominic Tarpeh is here representing the AAU.

At the May 1996 mid-term review of the Education for All initiative in Amman in Jordan, much was said about broadening the scope of partnerships working together to achieve the goals and target of Education for All. Among the partners that were mentioned were non-government organisations, the private sector, and the media. It seemed that there was an oversight of a natural partner in this work - the higher education institutions. This oversight was raised and there was much support for the idea that universities had a major role to play in this initiative.

With a view to developing a strategy to enable universities to enhance their role in assisting their countries achieve the goals of basic education as articulated in the Jomtien Conference on Education for All, the Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Department during 1995/96 commissioned eight case studies to examine the situation in Commonwealth countries. For this workshop we have collated all the studies (including those commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and prepared an overview synthesis report to focus discussion. This workshop which brings together all the writers of these report, together with expert resource persons and representatives of international support agencies which have an interest in seeing this work taken forward.

What do we expect from this workshop?

Our overall objective is to enhance capacity within HEIs to improve access to and quality of basic education in their countries. The specific outcomes that we are looking for are:

- to determine the most effective and appropriate strategies and mechanisms by which teachers and researchers in HEIs can impact on access and quality of basic education.

- to develop national/institutional strategic plans and pilot projects outlining how HEIs may proceed to enhance their role in basic education in collaboration with national and international partners.

- to provide resource for a monograph recording the experience of Commonwealth countries with respect to achieving the objectives of Education for All, illustrate the role HEI's have played in this process, and relate their success in developing strategies and mechanisms that have had a positive impact on basic education.

- to provide materials for a handbook of good practices for HEIs to achieve the targets of Education for All.

- to create a pool of HEI staff with capacity to develop basic education: identify key issues and problems, research issues, plan development strategies, train trainers, collaborate with basic education teacher educators and teachers.

Before I close my address I would like to express the Commonwealth Secretariat's gratitude to the large number of organisations and persons who have made this workshop possible.

First, I must say thank you to Universiti Sains Malaysia, in particular its Faculty of Educational Studies and the Basic Education Research Unit for kindly co-hosting this workshop. Dr Mustapa and Dr Kim and their staff have provided unstinting service in enabling this workshop to be realised.

They have liaised with us for nearly a year attending to the numerous details on the ground making arrangements for the local facilities and hospitality. The arrangements for today clearly demonstrate the attention that has been paid to detail to ensure a successful workshop.

I would like to express my gratitude to the resource persons, in particular to Dr Fiona Leach of the University of Sussex who has written the overview synthesis report for the workshop and is here with us to share her findings and to help facilitate the subsequent discussions. I should also say a special thank you to Professor Kazim Bacchus who has given up so much of his valuable time to be with us and give us the benefit of his long experience in this field.

I am especially grateful to the authors of the national case studies who are here today to participate in the deliberations from Botswana, Ghana, India, Malaysia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, South Pacific, Tanzania, Trinidad and Zambia. All have given up their valuable time to be here to share their experiences of good practice in their own countries of enhancing the role of universities in the education sector. I look to them to be the torchbearers for future activities in their countries and institutions and look forward with enthusiasm to a situation where universities are the major partners with governments and other NGOs in improving access to and quality of basic education across the Commonwealth.

I would also like to recognise the presence of the international agencies - Netherlands Foreign Affairs, GTZ, Association of African Universities - who will, I hope, share their agencies views on the subject and contribute to developing a plan of action in which some kind of partnership can be forged between the international agencies and the national efforts to increase the capacity of universities to engage in this endeavour.

In the usual *espirit de corps* of the Commonwealth, we look forward to a fruitful workshop whose outcomes will influence future trends and developments in this Commonwealth initiative dedicated to enhance the contribution of higher education to basic education across a number of Commonwealth countries.

Welcome and thank you.

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